

Son of the Dragon, by Steve Lyons

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[Part One]

RADU: (writing) June the 17th, one month since our army set out from Constantinople, and although we near our objective at last, our losses have been great. Our enemy's control of the Danube has forced us to march overland, so the sun dries our throats and melts our armour. Even Mehmed is losing heart. His voice, when he speaks to me at all now, is bereft of its old zeal for victory. His fondest hope, I fear, is simply for an end to this ordeal. As for myself, I begin to fear the dark rumours to be true. This is an accursed place, the Land of the Dragon.

(The Tardis materialises. Tardis door opens.)

PERI: Doctor, where on Earth are we?

(Tardis door closes.)

PERI: (coughs) It looks like a bomb site. What happened here?

ERIMEM: There has been a great fire, Peri.

PERI: I can see that, thanks, Erimem. I meant, what caused the fire?

DOCTOR: Fires plural, I'd say. Peri, look around you. There's hardly a building left untouched.

ERIMEM: Or an animal. All the beasts in this shelter have been slaughtered. Doctor, somebody has set out deliberately to destroy this village.

DOCTOR: And done a good job of it, by the looks of things.

PERI: Doctor, this couldn't be a plague village? I mean, that couldn't be why they burned everything? Quarantine?

DOCTOR: I don't think so. We've seen no bodies, at least, no human ones. It looks like everyone had time to evacuate before...

PERI: Shh. Doctor, listen.

MAN: (weak) Please, someone.

DOCTOR: It's coming from the other side of this cowshed. Come on, help me shift this beam

PERI: What do you think is on the other side?

DOCTOR: Pig pen? Village square? We'll soon find out. Stand back.

PERI: Oh my. I think I'm going to be sick.

MAN: Please, end it now. The pain...

DOCTOR: It's all right. You aren't alone anymore. Take my hand. That's it.

ERIMEM: Doctor, this man, he may be a criminal. In my land only criminals are impaled in such a fashion.

DOCTOR: And does that mean we can't show him compassion? At least his compatriots died quickly

MAN: He, he burned our homes, our livestock. We tried to stop him.

PERI: Who? Who was it? Who did this to you?

MAN: It was he. The Son of the Dragon. It was... Dracula.

DOCTOR: It's done.

PERI: You mean he's...

DOCTOR: No longer suffering.

ERIMEM: That is good.

PERI: Good? A man is dead and you think that's good?

ERIMEM: It is for him. His pain is gone. Doctor, which part of the world are we in?

PERI: Smart money says Transylvania.

DOCTOR: Not Transylvania, Peri, but close, I'd say.

(Distant voices approaching.)

ERIMEM: Doctor...

DOCTOR: Probably the neighbouring principality of Walachia. Part of Romania by your time.

ERIMEM: Doctor!

DOCTOR: As for the year, that's harder to pin-point, but certainly the latter half of the 15th century.

ERIMEM: Doctor!

DOCTOR: Yes, Erimem, I can hear them. The question is, whose side are they on? For that matter, whose side are we on? Do we stand or run?

PERI: We should get out of here.

ERIMEM: We should talk to them.

DOCTOR: Well, there's no time to flip a coin, so I say... run.

(Horses gallop up.)

ERIMEM: Doctor, we can't reach the Tardis before they catch us.
DOCTOR: Then perhaps we can lose them between the buildings, what's left of them.
PERI: Fat chance of that. They're right on... Oh Doctor, look out!
(The Doctor cries out. Breaking wood.)
ERIMEM: They've built a trap.
PERI: Doctor, can you hear me?
DOCTOR: Peri, take Erimem and run. Those horsemen could be back at any moment.
PERI: We're not leaving you. Doctor, are you hurt?
DOCTOR: No, no. My pride's a little dented, that's all. I should have known this was a trap. What else would a heap of leaves be doing in the middle of a village street?
ERIMEM: The riders, they're returning.
PERI: Come on, Doctor, climb out.
DOCTOR: I can't get a foot-hold. The walls are too muddy. Leave me. I'll be fine.
PERI: Oh, Doctor.
DOCTOR: Do it! Save Erimem.
RADU: Stay where you are, both of you. Well, I had taken you for Dracula's servants, but I see I am wrong. If you knew not of this snare...
ERIMEM: We are servants to nobody. I am Erimemunshinteperem, and I am... I was the Pharaoh of Egypt.
RADU: Indeed. Then allow me to introduce myself, my lady. I am known as Radu the Handsome.
(Peri snorts.)
ERIMEM: This is Peri, and our friend in the pit is called the Doctor.
DOCTOR: Pleased to meet you. Forgive me for not shaking hands.
RADU: And forgive me for taking you for the enemy. Madam, I shall have my men extract him at once.
ERIMEM: That is most kind of you.
PERI: Sorry to interrupt, Handsome, but shouldn't we get going before Drac... whoever did this comes back?
RADU: You need fear the Tyrant Prince no longer. You are under the protection of the Sultan's army now.
PERI: (sotto) Great. And that's a whole heap better because...?

DOCTOR: Come on, Peri, try to keep up.
PERI: Hey, don't blame me. This horse keeps stopping to stuff its stupid face. Whoa! Anyway, I don't know why you're in such a hurry. Every step is taking us further and further away from the Tardis.
DOCTOR: I can find my way back, don't worry. But I'd feel better if I could see Erimem.
PERI: And whose fault is that? You're the one who said she could ride up front with Radu the Handsome. Handsome, huh. Some ego he's got there.
DOCTOR: So you don't think he's handsome?
PERI: I never said that.
DOCTOR: Yes, well, Radu did request Erimem's company. It would have been churlish to refuse him, not to mention potentially dangerous.
PERI: Speaking of dangerous, let me see if I've got this straight. The village back there, this whole country, it's under attack by... by Count Dracula?
DOCTOR: Prince, actually.
PERI: What?
DOCTOR: Prince Vlad Dracula the Third, voivode of Walachia.
PERI: Voi what?
DOCTOR: Voivode. It's Slav for a Governor or ruler of a province.
PERI: I see. So we're not talking fangs and bats and walking down the walls of Transylvanian castles.
DOCTOR: Sadly no. This Dracula is, if anything, worse than his vampiric namesake.
PERI: Worse?!
DOCTOR: Yes. It's not for nothing that he earned the posthumous soubriquet of Vlad the Impaler.
PERI: Those villagers back there...
DOCTOR: Yes. A favourite punishment of his for anyone who stood in his way. Those peasants were probably sympathisers, collaborators with the enemy.
PERI: Doctor, this is Vlad's country. Those were his peasants he impaled. If Radu said he'd protect us from Dracula, that means...
DOCTOR: It means we're Dracula's enemies, yes. We're marching with the invaders, Peri, the Turkish army led by Sultan Mehmed II.
PERI: Sultan, eh? Does he have a pithy nickname too? Mehmed the Mangler, Mehmed the Merciless
DOCTOR: Mehmed the Conqueror, actually. Come on, Peri. Not much longer now, I shouldn't think. It's getting dark so we should be making camp soon. Let's see if we can tempt that horse of yours into a trot.
PERI: Whoa!

RADU: Halt! We will pitch camp here for the night. Check the farm buildings for signs of life, then begin unpacking the tents. My lady, may I assist you down from your mount?

ERIMEM: Thank you. I will wait by the well until my companions arrive.

RADU: As you wish. Now if you will forgive me, I must attend to the defences. You! Organise a detail to dig trenches.

SOLDIER: Yes, Commander.

RADU: See to the watering of the horses while you're at it.

SOLDIER: Immediately, my Lord.

ERIMEM: Yes, water. I could do with a drink.

RADU: (distant) Food! Food, I say. We must treat our honoured guests with the best we can provide. Where's that rascal cook?

ERIMEM: Radu the Handsome. His manners are likewise as handsome as his features. Radu? I drink to you.

RADU: Erimem, no!

ERIMEM: Radu, what is the meaning of this?

RADU: Forgive me, my lady, but you had the water to your lips and I thought you were about to drink.

ERIMEM: Naturally I was about to drink. I was thirsty.

RADU: It's poisoned. You drink that and within hours your tongue would turn black and you would begin coughing up blood.

ERIMEM: Poisoned? How can you be sure?

RADU: Dracula. He does not give ground gracefully. He puts his own crops to the torch, butchers his livestock and poisons his wells to deny us the use of them.

ERIMEM: Then it appears that I owe you my life.

RADU: And one day you will repay the debt, I hope. Until then I must insist that you remain with us. My conscience would rest uneasy were I to allow two fair young maidens to wander this blighted land alone.

ERIMEM: Thank you. You are most gracious. But Peri and I aren't alone. We have the Doctor.

RADU: The Doctor? I'm afraid a jester is poor protection against Dracula and his army of darkness.

ERIMEM: Jester?

RADU: Forgive me, but surely the Doctor is your fool.

ERIMEM: (laughs) No, he just dresses like that. The Doctor is no one's fool, believe me.

RADU: Indeed? Well, whatever his profession, you're all three welcome in our camp. You may share what food and water we still have. Though in these trying times I'm afraid the Sultan would expect such hospitality to be repaid in kind.

ERIMEM: Peri and I will assist in whatever way we can, though I'm sure the Doctor will be of far greater help to the Sultan.

RADU: Perhaps. But a doctor may only heal a man's body, my Lady. A beautiful woman such as yourself or the Lady Peri might heal his spirit. And the Sultan is a man of great spirit.

ERIMEM: Mmm. Forgive me, Radu. (yawns) But my servants and I have travelled a long way today.

RADU: And you are tired, of course. I will ensure that each of you have a meal and a place to sleep. We will discuss the matter no further until the morning.

ERIMEM: You are too kind.

RADU: And have no fear, my Lady. This may be the land of our enemy, but the camp is well fortified against intruders. You may rest safe in the knowledge that you are guarded well. Very well.

PERI: I don't even want to speculate as to what sort of meat that was. If it was meat.

DOCTOR: Horse, maybe? Or goat.

PERI: Goat? Are you... you've got to be kidding.

DOCTOR: Kidding. Very good. I'm glad to see your sense of humour hasn't died along with your appetite.

PERI: The pun was unintentional. Let's talk about something else. Tell me about the real Dracula.

DOCTOR: Very well. Are you sitting comfortably? Then we'll begin. Once upon a time

PERI: If you don't wish to go the same way as that goat, I suggest you try a different tack. I don't need a potted history, just an anecdote or two.

DOCTOR: An anecdote? All right. According to several contemporary witnesses, a thief broke into Dracula's home one night pursued by the Captain of the Guard. Vlad spared the thief, but executed the Captain. Why? Because the Captain was a gentleman and should have known better than to enter a home uninvited.

PERI: Hey. Vampires can't do that. Come into your house without being asked, I mean. You have to grant them permission first. That's why they're so charming to begin with. At least, that's what I've heard. Once. In a movie.

DOCTOR: Fascinating, isn't it, how truth becomes legend, how fact can be corrupted by fiction.

PERI: In other words, don't go breaking out the garlic and the crosses just yet.

DOCTOR: Ah, well, there's a case in point. Do you know what the word Dracula means?

PERI: No, but I'm sure you'll tell me.

DOCTOR: The Son of the Dragon. Prince Vlad inherited his father's position in the Order of the Dragon, a Christian society.

PERI: Christian?

DOCTOR: Yes, Peri. This particular vampire is perfectly happy with wearing a cross about his neck.

PERI: So what is he, a sort of Crusader?

DOCTOR: To his people he is a hero. He protects them from the Turks. Of course his enemies see him quite differently. They're the ones who first started portraying Dracula as a blood-drinking monster. Bram Stoker merely borrowed the name and the reputation.

PERI: Art imitating life.

DOCTOR: It would be enlightening to meet the man himself, don't you think? See the truth with our own eyes.

PERI: I think I could happily live without that particular piece of enlightenment, thank you. Look, Doctor, as far as I can see, we've landed ourselves in the middle of a war against one of the most violent and sadistic men in history. Shouldn't we just make our excuses and get out of here?

DOCTOR: Shh. (sotto) Peri, there's someone outside. Perhaps I was mistaken.

PERI: Doctor, this er vampire thing. They don't exist for real, do they?

DOCTOR: Well, I did meet some once.

PERI: What! You met some?

DOCTOR: Yes. Fangs, bats, the whole package.

PERI: Then... that noise we just heard?

DOCTOR: It's always a possibility, I suppose.

PERI: A poss (tent flap opens) Ah!

ERIMEM: Peri?

DOCTOR: Then again, it could just be Erimem come to say goodnight.

PERI: Oh! Erimem, what are you doing sneaking round at night?

ERIMEM: I was not sneaking. I came to tell you that I think we should leave.

PERI: Oh, for once you and I are in complete agreement. Come on, Doctor, let's get out of here.

DOCTOR: And how do you propose we manage that? In case it slipped your mind, may I remind you that we're currently surrounded by oh, I'd say fifty to sixty thousand armed soldiers?

ERIMEM: Most are asleep, exhausted from the journey. If we wait until the moon sets, we might be able to slip away unnoticed. I must return to my tent shortly or I shall be missed, but I will meet you by Radu's tent at midnight.

PERI: Sounds like a plan to me. Shall we synchronise our watches? Oh no, wait, it's the middle ages. Has anyone got an hour glass?

DOCTOR: Erimem, why do you want to leave? Has Radu said something or done something?

ERIMEM: No. He has been a perfect gentleman. But I fear the Sultan may have other designs. It appears that Peri and I will be invited to join his harem as his concubines.

PERI: His concubines?!

ERIMEM: And the Doctor will become his fool.

DOCTOR: His fool?

ERIMEM: That is why I thought it best to leave.

PERI: Well, you've convinced me.

DOCTOR: All right. We should be able to slip past the sentries without too much trouble. They'll be watching for movement outside the camp, not inside. Our biggest worry, I'd say, is what might be waiting for us out there.

PERI: You mean...

DOCTOR: Yes, Peri. Dracula.

RADU: Doctor? Doctor, there is no use in hiding. I have seen you.

DOCTOR: Ah. Not hiding, Radu, I was just er... I didn't want to disturb you. My, that's a handsome blade. Living up to its owner's nickname, eh? Radu the Handsome.

RADU: You prattle, Doctor. I persuaded the Sultan to grant you protection, a stranger in a hostile land, because the Pharaoh Erimem vouched for you. But now I find you skulking around my tent.

DOCTOR: Ah, I see. You think I might be a spy.

RADU: You would not be the first. Our enemy has many eyes and ears at his command. Do you know what we do when we catch one of his spies, Doctor?

DOCTOR: Offer him some Turkish Delight and a glass of mint tea?

RADU: We behead them.

DOCTOR: Ah, well, I was close.

RADU: Fortunately for you, I do not think you are a spy. But if you are, then I rejoice, for our enemy must truly be weakening if he employs such as you to be his agent.

DOCTOR: That was a fairly lamentable attempt to hide, I'll admit.

RADU: A child of five could have done better.

DOCTOR: Oh, six, surely.

RADU: So what are you doing out here so late at night?

DOCTOR: The same as you. Thinking.

RADU: And have you much to think about?

DOCTOR: Not as much as you, I'm sure. All those horsemen under your command, lives in your hands, not to mention reputations. It's well known that of all the officers, you're the Sultan's favourite. And yet you're neither Turk nor Muslim. Precarious situation, I'd say, and fraught with dangers, especially now that victory seems to be eluding you.

RADU: I see that you are not the fool I took you for. Only two weeks ago defeat was unthinkable. Our cause was just. Now...

DOCTOR: Is any cause worth all this? Let alone one that stems from Sultan Mehmed's ego.

RADU: Be careful what you say, Doctor.

DOCTOR: You don't care if Walachia pays tribute to Mehmed or not, Radu. That's not why you're fighting. You care about the land itself, the land of your birth.

RADU: I will not leave it in the hands of that tyrant. Yet when I see the damage this war has wrought – loyal men cut down, the finest army in the world brought almost to its knees – God help me, Doctor, I'm almost starting to believe what our people say. That our enemy is some sort of demon, a devil in human form.

DOCTOR: You know that's not true, Radu. You know Prince Vlad is as human as you are. He is, after all, your brother.

RADU: Why, who told you?

(Commotion nearby.)

RADU: What is happening? Is this your doing, Doctor? Was it your intent to distract me?

DOCTOR: Not from this, Radu. Not from this. Come on.

RADU: No, Doctor. I must protect the Sultan.

DOCTOR: Once again it seems I'm in the wrong place at the wrong time.

AYFER: Quick, my Lady, quick. Kasiklu Bey.

PERI: What time is it? Hey, who are you?

AYFER: Ayfer.

PERI: Pleased to meet you, Ayfer. I'm Peri. Now what's the hurry?

AYFER: Kasiklu Bey. He has come to defile and mutilate our bodies.

PERI: Kasiglu who?

AYFER: The Impaler Prince. He's here, in our camp.

PERI: Dracula? Here? What about the Doctor and Erimem? Oh, they're out there somewhere. I've got to get to them.

AYFER: Lady Peri, no. You must hide. Our attacker, he delights in the slaughter of women and babies. If he sees you, he will gouge out your eyes and drive a stake through your heart.

PERI: Yeah, well, that doesn't sound too hot, I'll admit, but we can't just sit here and do nothing. Do you have any weapons? A knife, a hat pin, anything we can defend ourselves with?

AYFER: What good would that do us? If Kasiklu Bey can fight his way past our guards, past the whole of our army, then how can we poor women stop him?

PERI: I'm no poor woman, Ayfer. Dracula or no Dracula, we need to find the Doctor. Come on, help me pull this tent pole free. At least then we'll have something to defend ourselves with.

ERIMEM: Ah! By the might of Osiris himself, I will not yield!

DOCTOR: Damn it, Erimem, it's me. It's the Doctor.

ERIMEM: Doctor! Oh, thank the gods you've found me. I couldn't reach our meeting place. Doctor, where's Peri?

DOCTOR: If I knew that... Well, if I knew that it would make a refreshing change, wouldn't it?

ERIMEM: If she is wise, she will have taken cover until the fighting is over.

DOCTOR: Then she'll have a long wait. This battle will rage all night and claim thousands of lives.

ERIMEM: How can you be so sure?

DOCTOR: Because I read about it. Dracula's night attack on the Turkish camp. I should have checked the date. June 17th, 1462. You can navigate by the stars, yes?

ERIMEM: Of course.

DOCTOR: Well, I need you to go south-west.

ERIMEM: I won't leave you, Doctor. We must find Peri.

DOCTOR: No, I must find Peri. And it'll be a lot easier for me to focus on that task once I know you're safe.

ERIMEM: Do not fear for me, Doctor. I have this. (a sword)

DOCTOR: Where did you get that?

ERIMEM: I took it from a fallen Turk. Don't worry, Doctor, I am well-versed in swordplay.

DOCTOR: You and about seventy thousand other people in our immediate vicinity. Listen, Erimem. Our greatest asset is that our clothing is neither Walachian nor Turkish. The second you swing that scimitar, you'll be declaring your allegiance to the Turks, and that will make you a target.

ERIMEM: I'm already a target! But don't worry, I will fight only in self-defence.

DOCTOR: Listen to me. Go south-west, as straight a course as you can manage. Once you're clear of the

fighting, find a place to hide and wait for me there.
ERIMEM: I will go, Doctor, but on one condition.
DOCTOR: I'll find her, and I'll bring her back. I swear. Now go!

PERI: They're everywhere! Fighting, dying. Ayfer, I thought your people outnumbered those of Kasi... I mean, Dracula. Vlad... the Impaler. Oh, how many names does one man need anyway.
AYFER: They are exhausted from the march, Lady Peri, and Kasiklu Bey has the power of darkness behind him.
PERI: Yes, I was forgetting that. (fire) Oh great, that's all we need, a flaming tepee. Come on, Ayfer, we're getting out of here.
AYFER: But we can't survive on the battlefield.
PERI: You'd rather be burnt alive?
AYFER: How can you be so brave, my Lady? You have neither arms nor armour.
PERI: You're forgetting my tent pole. Anyone dares come near us out there, they're getting the pointy end right up their nose.

RADU: Doctor, wait.
DOCTOR: Radu.
RADU: Doctor... let me catch my breath.
DOCTOR: Did you find your Sultan?
RADU: Yes, or rather no. I saw him flee from his tent, but I couldn't reach him. The fighting was too thick. He's probably on the other side of that mountain by now.
DOCTOR: Licking his wounds, no doubt.
RADU: I should have been at his side, damn it. Could you believe the audacity of our foe, Doctor, to attack us here, in the heart of our camp? Dracula must be insane.
DOCTOR: Or a genius. If Sultan Mehmed had been killed in his bed, this war would have been over.
RADU: Dracula's legend can only grow through this night's work. The demon made flesh, the devil incarnate. But what of you, Doctor? I find you in the thick of the fight without even a sword to defend yourself. How is it you still stand?
DOCTOR: No demonic powers here, I'm afraid. Just dumb luck. And determination. I have a missing person to find.
RADU: Mistress Erimem?
DOCTOR: No, no, she's safe. At least I hope she is. But I haven't seen Peri since before the fighting began. I just hope she's had the sense to find cover and stay put.
RADU: Here, Doctor, you should take this. I have another blade.
DOCTOR: I appreciate the offer, Radu, but I never fight if I can help it.
DOBRIN: There's two over here. Charge!
RADU: Looks like that luck of yours has just run out. Here, take it.
DOCTOR: Perhaps it would come in handy.

DRACULA: Shadow. Shadow, calm yourself. We've seen worse fighting than this.
SOLDIER: For the traitor!
DRACULA: No, no, Shadow! (Thud!)
SOLDIER: What's the matter, devil? Is your horse too heavy for you?
DRACULA: Curse you. What kind of a coward kills a horse?
SOLDIER: The kind of coward that's about to end your miserable life. No, get off me, girl! You'll pay for your interference, you evil witch.
DRACULA: No. No. It is you who will pay. (soldier dies) Are you all right, girl?
ERIMEM: I shouldn't have involved myself. This is not my fight.
DRACULA: Oh, do not apologise. The infidel unseated me. If not for you he might have taken my life.
ERIMEM: You were wounded, you were on the ground. Your enemy had an unfair advantage. I could not stand by and let him kill you.
DRACULA: Oh, it was brave of you.
ERIMEM: Not brave, foolhardy.
DRACULA: Who are you, girl? You have the appearance of a Turk and yet you are not clothed as one. They would not tolerate such immodesty. Come, help free me from my horse.
ERIMEM: My name is Erimemunshinteperem, and I was born in Egypt.
DRACULA: Egypt, eh? Then you are not a Christian.
ERIMEM: I worship many gods. Once I was considered a god myself.
DRACULA: I can imagine how that claim was received by your Turkish friends. You were their prisoner, I take it?
ERIMEM: Of a sort.
DRACULA: Then it is fortunate for us both that you happened this way, young lady. Such courage as you

have shown deserves its reward. Come.

ERIMEM: Thank you, but I must decline your reward. My companions will be along

DRACULA: You defy me, girl? Is it possible you do not recognise me?

ERIMEM: My apologies. I meant no offence.

DRACULA: I am Prince Vlad the Third, son of Vlad the Great, and sovereign and ruler of Ungro-Walachia and the Duchies of Amlas and Fagaras. But since my father's murder I have had another name. I am Dracula.

[Part Two]

DOCTOR: Breathe deeply. In, out. That's right. I know you're tired but you mustn't close your eyes, do you hear me? Look at me. Concentrate on my words. You've lost a lot of blood. You must stay awake.

SOLDIER: I should have died in battle.

DOCTOR: Well, now you can live to fight another day, eh?

RADU: Doctor, leave him be. There are men dying all over this battlefield. You cannot save them all.

DOCTOR: I can save this one, Radu.

RADU: For what? His wounds are too great. He will not fight again.

SOLDIER: Kill me. I do not wish to live.

DOCTOR: Don't talk. He needs water. Water, over here. Come on. Stay awake. Radu, no!

(Squelchy splash, gurgle.)

RADU: We have no water to spare for the dead, Doctor. There is little enough for the living. His blood was poisoned. He would have lasted a few days at most, in torment, you know that. I've done him a mercy.

DOCTOR: You're right. I know you're right. It's stupid, I know, but I thought if I could save just one life, then maybe there was hope. Maybe I could save...

RADU: You have done all you can. I saw how you fought last night. We forced our attackers into retreat. By all accounts, Dracula himself fled, wounded, as the sun rose. And you had as much to do with that as any man. We have snatched a small victory from what looked like certain defeat.

DOCTOR: We? I didn't choose to fight your war, Radu. None of us did. Peri, Erimem and I came here to explore, to learn. And when that didn't work out we just wanted to go home. I'm responsible for their safety, Radu, and I have failed. Failed spectacularly.

RADU: Doctor, I believe I may know the whereabouts of the Lady Erimem, though I am not sure it is something you will want to hear.

DOCTOR: Tell me, Radu. I have to know.

RADU: I've just been speaking to my men. One of them says he saw Lady Erimem being taken from the battle, on horseback.

DOCTOR: So she's alive.

RADU: Doctor, the horse, it was being ridden by Dracula. There is a chance, a small chance, that you may see her again. I found Sultan Mehmed – it took me nearly an hour – but I persuaded him we should march on, to Dracula's capital, Târgoviște. Perhaps we may be in time to save the Lady Erimem.

DOCTOR: And Peri? Have your men found her yet?

RADU: Doctor, please, do not torture yourself. There is no hope for the girl. The burial pits are filling with bodies whose names we won't ever remember.

DOCTOR: Do you know that for sure, Radu? Have you seen Peri's body with your own eyes? Because until I do, until I have proof that she is gone, I won't accept it. I've made enough compromises in the past twelve hours. No more.

RADU: I take it then that you wish to come with us.

DOCTOR: Yes, Radu, I'll march with you, and I'll fight the Son of the Dragon himself if I have to, because I brought my friends here and I don't intend to leave either one of them behind.

PERI: Oh great, another cowpat.

DOBRIN: You all right, Miss?

PERI: Stay away, buster. I'm warning you, I'm armed.

DOBRIN: And a very impressive tent pole it is.

PERI: Sorry. Guess I over-reacted a little there.

DOBRIN: Look, I meant no harm, Miss. I was just trying to help. We're all on the same side here. All part of the glorious army of Prince Vlad the Third, eh?

PERI: Army? I thought all these people were refugees, Mister... sorry, I don't know your name.

DOBRIN: John Dobrin, Miss. Peasant turned soldier. I'm one of the lucky ones. My home's at Poenari in the north. By the time the Turks reach there, if they ever do, shouldn't think I'll be alive enough to care.

PERI: I'm Peri. Peri Brown.

DOBRIN: You on your own, then?

PERI: For the moment. I was with a girl called Ayfer, but we got separated. Hope she's all right.

DOBRIN: Oh, I'm sure she'll be fine. She's probably up at the monastery with the other women and children.

That's where you ought to be if you had any sense.

PERI: We Browns aren't renowned for our sense. Besides, I have another friend. She's up front somewhere with the horses. I saw her riding away from the battle last night with one of the soldiers. I thought I could keep up with her, but I didn't think we'd be going so far.

DOBRIN: We'll soon be at the city gates, Miss Peri. You can see the domes of the churches just between those trees. You ever been to Târgoviște before?

PERI: Not to my knowledge. I'm kinda new to these parts.

DOBRIN: Well, that's where our work will really begin. The Turks have advanced about as far as we can allow. Now we fight for the capital.

(Door creaks, footsteps.)

ERIMEM: What... what is this place? Who are you?

MARIA: Good morning, my Lady. I see the whispers were right. The master has brought back a handsome prize from his crusade.

ERIMEM: I don't know what you have heard, but I am nobody's prize.

MARIA: Indeed? I'm sure I'm wrong then. No doubt you are used to sleeping in damask on a goose feather bed in the palace of a prince. Take heed, little bird. The master is not on the battlefield now to have his head turned by some Turkish tramp. He is home, and he has no need of your kind when his own can serve him so well.

DRACULA: Maria, enough! The Pharaoh Erimem is my guest, and you will afford her every courtesy during her stay. Now fetch her breakfast at once!

MARIA: Y-yes, master.

ERIMEM: Prince Vlad, there is no need

DRACULA: Did she touch you, Erimem? If she did, say the word and she will be punished.

ERIMEM: She did not touch me. But I meant what I told her. I'm not some trophy to be won by you.

DRACULA: You flinch from me. What have you heard, Erimem? That I will boil you alive, dismember you, drink your blood? Those are just lies told by jealous men or scolding mothers who wish to frighten their children.

ERIMEM: Then I am free to leave?

DRACULA: This room, certainly.

ERIMEM: And the palace?

DRACULA: So long as I can spare the guards to escort you. But why expose yourself to risk? Have patience. This war will be won within days, perhaps sooner, and then the freedom of my country will be yours.

ERIMEM: And if the war is not won, but lost?

DRACULA: The Turks have superior numbers, but they are an inferior people, used to dealing with spineless rulers who can be easily bullied into servitude. Well now, now they face a warrior. A man prepared to defend his faith with steel and sinew.

ERIMEM: I was in their camp. Their commander too is a man of great determination.

DRACULA: The Sultan? Ha, ha. I know Mehmed of old. He is a coward at heart, hiding behind his titles.

Well, let him approach. Let him see the welcome I have prepared for him, and then we shall how eager the Conqueror remains for his conquest.

RADU: Doctor, another sighting of your companion.

DOCTOR: Peri?

RADU: The Pharaoh Erimem. My spies in Târgoviște say that she has been made welcome at the Prince's palace there.

DOCTOR: You have people in the capital?

RADU: Vlad has many enemies, Doctor. More than he believes. You've seen his army, that rag-tag band of peasants and gypsies. The boyars, the noblemen of Walachia, won't fight for him.

DOCTOR: Nor will they oppose him.

RADU: They have principles, but they fear him. On the first Easter of his reign, Vlad invited 200 boyars to his banqueting hall, and they feasted well. When the meal was over, they found his soldiers waiting for them. The older men and their families were slaughtered, the able-bodied enslaved.

DOCTOR: And you believe Turkish rule would be more just. Correct me if I'm wrong, Radu, but haven't you spent most of your life as their prisoner?

RADU: I was treated more kindly by the old Sultan Murad than I ever have been by my own flesh. I, Vlad and I, we were raised in the Sultan's court alongside his own son Mehmed. All they asked of my father was his fealty to keep us safe. He could not give even that much for his sons.

DOCTOR: And yet the old Sultan spared you. More than that, he must have actively supported you, otherwise you'd never have risen to such an important post in his army.

RADU: This is what my father never understood. The Turks are a tolerant and cultured people. They even allow me to practice my Christian faith.

DOCTOR: Then tell that to the boyars, Radu. Gain their support. Remove your brother from his throne by

diplomacy, not by force.

RADU: Ah, you don't know him, Doctor. Vlad was always deceitful, always looking to gain power over others. He allowed Sultan Murad to believe he was loyal so he could use our army for his own ends. He won't give up what he has gained without a fight.

DOCTOR: Ah yes, I remember now. Sultan Murad supported Vlad's claim to the Walachian throne, yes?

RADU: It was his greatest mistake. I always knew my brother would betray us. War was inevitable.

DOBRIN: Steady on the left, there. That's it. (clang!) Oh, careful, you idiot. This all that stands between us and the Turks. You there, take the strain on that rope.

PERI: John? John Dobrin, there you are. I've been looking all over for you.

DOBRIN: Miss Peri. Did you find your friend?

PERI: Oh, I found her, but things are a little more complicated than I'd expected. Look, John, I need your help.

DOBRIN: Hey, you, take up that slack. It's a cannon, not a kite. Shouldn't you be busy with something, Miss Peri? Plenty of men about the capital with injuries that need attending to, or clothes that need mending.

PERI: I never was much use at sewing. Clothes or flesh. John, please, my friend Erimem, she's with Prince Vlad. He kidnapped her and took her to his palace.

DOBRIN: And what do you think I can do?

PERI: I don't know. I just know we have to get her out of there somehow. I've seen what Dracula does to anyone who so much as looks sideways at him. I'm worried about her, John.

DOBRIN: I'd save your worry for yourself. That's the Prince's carriage. It looks like he's taking a tour of the city walls, inspecting the fortifications.

PERI: So?

DOBRIN: So maybe it was different where you come from, Miss Peri. Maybe you did what you pleased away from the Prince's eyes and ears. But this is Târgoviște, his capital. He catches you idle here, especially now when there's so much work to be done, and he'll have you put to the stake. Here, take this rope, quickly. (Carriage passes.)

PERI: Hey, wait a minute. In the carriage. That's her! It's Erimem! It's my friend! Erimem! Hey, Erimem!

DOBRIN: Miss Peri, no! Come back!

PERI: (distant) Erimem!

PERI: Erimem, it's me! Erimem! Come back!

ERIMEM: Peri! It's Peri.

DRACULA: You know that girl?

ERIMEM: Yes. Peri is my... my servant. She must have followed us from the Turkish camp. Can we not go back for her?

DRACULA: No, I have enough servants. And while you are a guest at my palace, they will attend to your needs too.

ERIMEM: But please, I

DRACULA: You may write to the girl, if she can read. Tell her you have no further need of her, but she may stay in the city by my leave. Find herself a husband, do her duty by him, and I may even forgive her impertinence in shouting at my carriage.

ERIMEM: I left Peri behind without a word. I'm sure she was just worried about me.

DRACULA: Well, she need worry no more. And neither should you.

RADU: This abomination. This is not war. Born of my father's flesh he may have been, but Vlad... Dracula... is no less than a monster.

DOCTOR: On this evidence I cannot disagree.

RADU: The bodies, they stretch in all directions as far as the eye can see. Thousands of them.

DOCTOR: Twenty thousand. The forest of the impaled. A scene that will haunt the history books for centuries.

RADU: How came they here?

DOCTOR: They walked. Vlad marched them here, a full thirty leagues from his capital. Men, women, children, all the prisoners he had taken, slaughtered, and their impaled remains planted here for the ravens.

RADU: This is the end of all. How can we fight an enemy who can do this?

DOCTOR: There is another way. Call it a hunch, Radu, but I don't think history has finished with you yet.

ERIMEM: (writing) Dear Peri, I pray this letter finds you and that my writing is good enough to convey my meaning. I wanted to assure you that Prince Vlad is a generous host who ensures I want for nothing. I enjoy the freedom to roam his palace and its grounds, even his private garden. Do not worry for me, Peri. The Prince's guards... Hey!

MARIA: I knew you were not to be trusted! Writing secret messages to the Sultan's supporters, are you? Wait till the master hears about this. A secret code, too. Oh, we are in trouble.

ERIMEM: Give that back to me. It's English. Written English. My friend Peri has been teaching it to me, not that it's any business of yours. I don't recall summoning you to my chamber.

MARIA: You think you're so clever, don't you, with your pretty face and your fine words. Well, let's see what the master thinks of you when your face has a few scars on it!

ERIMEM: No!

RADU: (writing) It is almost a relief. For some time now I have felt it would end like this. Upon seeing what had been done to our kinsmen, Mehmed's courage failed him. He knows what his decision will cost him, but he has no choice. Had he not ordered a withdrawal, many would have fled our ranks anyway. The unthinkable has come to pass. My brother has defeated us, and he has done so not by force of arms, but by striking terror into the hearts of the bravest of men. And so we are to return to my adoptive homeland, and yet still I too am fearful. My new-found friend, the Doctor, whose words gave me such comfort in recent days, has disappeared. In the midst of our forces, I feel alone, exposed.

MARIA: No, I will be good, I promise. Please. (thump)

ERIMEM: My Lord, that is no way to treat...

DRACULA: Please. Leave this to me. Now, Maria, explain yourself. Come on. Come on, you accursed witch!

MARIA: (crying) It wasn't my fault, master. She is a spy! She confessed it to me. She was writing in secret code to betray your plans to the infidel.

ERIMEM: I confessed of nothing of the sort. I was writing to my friend Peri as you wished me to when this wretch attacked me.

DRACULA: Oh, I am disappointed. I thought you a faithful subject, Maria.

MARIA: But I am, master, I swear it. I live to serve you. I only wish to protect you from this Turkish spy!

DRACULA: Be silent! Is it not enough that you disobeyed me? Do you now also lie to my face?

MARIA: I can give you what she cannot, master. I am... I am with child. Did you not hear me, master? I'm carrying your heir.

DRACULA: Take her downstairs.

MARIA: No! Master, please, no! I won't disobey you again. (receding) Spare my life, I beg you, please. Think of the child, your son.

ERIMEM: Prince Vlad, I beg you not to do anything rash. Maria is jealous, yes, but her loyalty to you is without question. I think you should (thump, gasp)

DRACULA: Do not question my decisions, there's a good girl. I can only forgive so much, even for a face as pretty as yours. Push me too far and you will share the fate of all who displease me. Now go.

DOCTOR: Do we really have to go through all this again? I've already told you. I'm visiting a friend in the capital. Two friends, I hope.

SOLDIER: And I have told you. Târgoviște's closed to strangers.

DOCTOR: Oh, this is ridiculous. You can see I'm alone, and I've laid down my sword. All right, I claim sanctuary from the Turks. Oh, very well. Maybe I can find something in my pockets that will grease the wheels, as it were.

SOLDIER: You insult me, stranger. My loyalty is to my Prince. It cannot be bought.

DOCTOR: Ah. No. No, of course not. Listen, my friend. Erimem is a guest of Prince Vlad. I... I happen to be her personal physician and adviser, and she would want to see me.

SOLDIER: The Prince, eh? Oh, very well. I'll take you to the palace. Gredj, take over gate duty for me.

GREDJ: Sir!

DOCTOR: This is very good of you, but really there's no need. I'm sure I can find my own way.

SOLDIER: Don't thank me yet, stranger. Few who are shown to the palace ever come out again.

(Knock on door.)

DRACULA: Come in.

(Door opens.)

DRACULA: Oh, John Dobrin. It's good to see you again, my old friend. To what do I owe this unexpected visit, eh? I understood you and your brothers were to return shortly to Poenari.

DOBRIN: May I speak freely, my Prince?

DRACULA: Of course, of course. Your family has always been most loyal to the House of Dracula.

DOBRIN: Oh, we are honoured to serve, my Prince. The matter is but a small one. You have a house guest, I believe. A noble lady by the name of Erimem?

DRACULA: You have information regarding her?

DOBRIN: Not her, no. Her young friend, Miss Peri.

DRACULA: I am aware of the girl. What of her?

DOBRIN: She has been speaking out against you, my Prince. I have tried my best to silence her, to instruct her in her duties, but she's angry. Miss Peri won't accept that the Lady Erimem is yours now. When last I saw her, she... well, I'm sure it was an idle threat.

DRACULA: What? What did she say?

DOBRIN: She swore to take Erimem back from you, my Prince. She swore to take her if it meant forcing her way into this palace.

PERI: Oh, come on, Erimem. Where are you? This has to be the right place. The Prince's garden, just like you said in your letter. Don't tell me I've scraped both my knees and nearly lost a heel dragging myself over that wall for nothing.

(Throat cleared.)

PERI: Hi. You startled me. I didn't see you there. Now, I bet you're wondering what I'm doing here, aren't you? Well, I... I'm a garden designer. The Prince asked me to take a look at this place, see if I can, you know, spruce it up a bit. A few gladioli over there, a water feature here.

(Sword drawn.)

PERI: Hedge trimming?

ERIMEM: You wanted to see me, Prince Vlad?

DRACULA: Erimem, my dear, welcome to the watchtower, my own addition to my father's palace.

ERIMEM: Do the Turks approach? Is that why you summoned me here?

DRACULA: No, no. The Turks, my dear, have left. I doubt they will be seen again in this country in my lifetime.

ERIMEM: Then the war is over.

DRACULA: It is over. And with God and right on my side, I have won a resounding victory.

ERIMEM: Then I may leave Târgoviște. It is safe for me now to return to my travels.

DRACULA: If that is what you wish. I did hope you might come to appreciate the view from this window. Many hours I have spent myself gazing upon this beautiful land.

ERIMEM: Your land is indeed beautiful.

DRACULA: And down into my courtyard.

ERIMEM: Prince Vlad, I have no wish to revel in the sufferings of those wretches down there, nor to see their bodies displayed in so gruesome a fashion.

DRACULA: The bodies act as a warning to my people. I have all but eradicated crime in my country, Erimem, but constant vigilance is required to keep the weed from returning. Why, only an hour ago an intruder scaled the walls of this very palace.

ERIMEM: A thief, my Prince? Or an assassin?

DRACULA: No, that is still to be determined. Though whichever is the case, the penalty is the same, and my armati are about to enforce it. You do not wish to argue for clemency?

ERIMEM: No. Neither do I wish to watch.

DRACULA: That is your choice. However, I think you may be interested in this particular execution.

PERI: (distant) Take your hands off me! You can't do this to me! I want to see my lawyer!

ERIMEM: Peri? You mean Peri is your intruder.

DRACULA: She broke our laws and will pay the price. You did not plead for clemency a moment ago. The crime has become no less severe since then.

ERIMEM: You planned this. That's why you brought me here. You wanted me to see.

DRACULA: Think long and hard, Erimem, before you accuse Dracula of deception.

ERIMEM: I saved your life.

DRACULA: And enjoyed my protection and hospitality in return. You have eaten at my table, slept in my palace, and yet it seems your dearest wish is to abandon me at your first opportunity.

ERIMEM: Prince Vlad, I beg you. Peri is more than a servant to me. I have come to think of her as a friend, a dear friend.

DRACULA: Then avert your eyes. It should not be long now. The stake will have been oiled already. It only remains for my men to tie the girl's feet to the horses and then... What's happening down there? Guards! Guards!

DOCTOR: Hold on, Peri. I'll have you free of this rope in a jiffy.

PERI: Oh, Doctor. Boy, am I glad to see you. Nice outfit, by the way. Where'd you get it?

DOCTOR: Why don't you ask that guard over there?

PERI: The one in his underpants?

DOCTOR: That's him. There, you're free. Come on, Peri. Let's get the next horse out of here. Here, give me a hand up.

PERI: Doctor, look out behind you!

(Thump, thud.)

PERI: Er, hi there. You're shorter than I expected. No fangs either, which is good.

DRACULA: You could be forgiven, girl, for believing you had nothing to lose a moment ago. You will soon learn how mistaken you are.

ERIMEM: Prince Vlad, no. Please, don't hurt them.

DRACULA: Silence! This is my palace. I will deal with this.

DOCTOR: Your Highness, I can only apologise for this intrusion.

DRACULA: You beat and strip my guard, steal into my home to free a condemned prisoner, and you call it a mere intrusion?

DOCTOR: If there had been time to make a formal appeal to your Highness I would have made it.

Unfortunately I have only just arrived in your city and had to act quickly in order to prevent an injustice.

DRACULA: Well, better and better. There are few bold enough to question the justice of my laws.

DOCTOR: I'm sure, but Peri here comes from a far away land. It's a country without Lords or Kings, where women don't know their place.

PERI: Hey, watch it, Mister.

DOCTOR: You see what I mean? I'm still er... teaching her the ways of civilisation. Whatever she did to offend you, she did in ignorance.

ERIMEM: The Doctor speaks the truth, Prince Vlad. Peri knows not your laws, and if she has broken them it was only for my sake.

DRACULA: Then who am I to hold to account for this crime? My royal sanctuary has been violated twice, my men assaulted, and that cannot go unpunished.

DOCTOR: I am to blame. It was I who

ERIMEM: No, Doctor. This is my responsibility.

DOCTOR: Erimem, please. You don't know what you're saying.

ERIMEM: Vlad, I know what you want. This is not about Peri or the Doctor. It's about me. Well, I will make a deal with you. Release them both, swear to me they will not be harmed, and I will remain here in your palace.

DRACULA: You would pledge yourself to me in exchange for the lives of your companions?

ERIMEM: Yes. I promise to be faithful to you for as long as you wish it.

PERI: Erimem, you can't.

DOCTOR: Erimem, this is madness.

DRACULA: Well, Erimem? What is your decision? Will you promise to become my wife?

ERIMEM: I give you my oath. By the blood of the sacred Pharaohs that runs through me, my life is yours, my Prince. My husband.

DRACULA: Behold, my people. Behold the bride of Dracula!

[Part Three]

RADU: (writing) July the 2nd. Word reaches me that Sultan Mehmed has crossed the Walachian border at last. He will return to Constantinople with claims of victory, but even as we fled, the sickness took hold in our depleted ranks. It seemed the curse of Dracula was upon us still. I doubt we will ever again raise a willing force against him, and if we did, I'm sure the Sultan would not be at its head. That is why I have parted company with his army, and remain in Walachia with a few loyal men. I remember the Doctor's wise words to me, and I hope to find his other way.

PERI: (reading) Out of respect for me, Vlad will not order you to leave, but it is clear to us both that you stay only for my sake, and this makes him uneasy. I beg you therefore to consider your position with great care. Yours eternally, Erimem. Doctor, what is she saying?

DOCTOR: I'd have thought that was obvious, Peri. Erimem is warning us to leave Târgoviște before we exhaust the Prince's patience.

PERI: We can't abandon her! I can't. She's only in this mess because of me.

DOCTOR: Peri, you are not to blame for all this. Dracula is a man used to getting what he wants. He'd have found a way to keep Erimem with him even if it hadn't been for your... our intervention.

PERI: How much longer before we do something? I'm sick of waiting around here all this time, trying to mend clothes and cook and mind my P's and Q's like a good little girl.

DOCTOR: I can see that must be a chore.

PERI: On the plus side, at least my sewing skills are improving. A little.

DOCTOR: The woman who owns this house, Irina, I take it she's happy for you to continue staying here?

PERI: I guess so.

DOCTOR: As long as I help out on the farms, I can always find food and a bed for the night. So, we wait and we hope, just for a little longer. I had a few words with Radu before I left him, and I have great expectations of that man.

PERI: I still can't believe he's Dracula's brother. Talk about beauty and the beast. Anyway, what can Radu do? I thought the Turks had gone home.

DOCTOR: Radu isn't a Turk, Peri, and I think we'll be hearing more from him sooner than you think. And when we do, maybe history itself will give us the helping hand we need.

ERIMEM: I wish you would talk to me, Vlad. You have seemed so distant these past days. I thought you would be in better spirits now that the siege of Chilia is ended.

DRACULA: Oh yes, another battle over, another few days of precious peace won, another cousin bested.

ERIMEM: Stephen betrayed you. He waited until he thought you were vulnerable, spent from your war with the Turks, and then attacked.

DRACULA: And he learned his mistake. It is said he will not recover from his wounds. The latest victim of Dracula's curse.

ERIMEM: Do you like that? That your enemies, even your friends, have come to think of you as some sort of a demon.

DRACULA: Would that it kept more of them at bay. But no sooner do I vanquish one threat from without than two more arise from within. I swear, Erimem, sometimes I think there is not a king or a nobleman in the whole of Europe who does not plot against me.

ERIMEM: That is what you said about the King of Hungary, until he came to your aid at Chilia.

DRACULA: This one time, yes. It suited Matthias to make a gesture. Where was he when I needed, begged for his support against Mehmed the Conqueror? Where were my own boyars?

ERIMEM: I have heard it said, my Prince, that the boyars have good reason to wish another man upon this throne.

DRACULA: I don't wish to speak of that with you.

ERIMEM: Then what may we speak of, Vlad? Because we eat together in this hall every day, and we discuss war and politics and traitors, and nothing about ourselves. I would like to understand a little at least about the man to whom I have pledged my life. The man who is about to become my husband. Or is it your intention that I too should only know the demon? (leaves)

DRACULA: And so it begins.

DOCTOR: Ah, there you are, Peri. Have you finished your sewing for this morning?

PERI: I rather think it's finished with me. Everything I do looks like it was stitched by Frankenstein.

DOCTOR: Come on, let's walk and talk.

PERI: You have news?

DOCTOR: Of a sort. I've just been speaking with one of the local big-wigs - an avid supporter of the Prince, sadly - and he passed on a very interesting tidbit he'd heard.

PERI: I'm all ears.

DOCTOR: Well, nobody's perfect. Anyway, it seems our friend Radu has been drumming up support in the outlying villages.

PERI: Any chance he could drum a bit quicker? I'd rather not hang around here waiting for Dracula to decide I'm just some freeloader. We all know what he does to vagabonds.

DOCTOR: I suppose that's one way to eliminate poverty.

PERI: Doctor!

DOCTOR: Peri, this is 1462. In a few years time there'll be a law passed in Britain to deal with vagrancy. A first offence will get you whipped and your eyes put out with a hot iron. For a second you can expect to be hanged.

PERI: What has that got to do with the price of eggs?

DOCTOR: I'm just pointing out that you might judge Prince Vlad somewhat less harshly if you'd been borne in this time. Or in Erimem's, for that matter. You must always judge history in its context.

PERI: But aren't we altering history simply by being here? The text books might fail to mention an over-qualified farm hand and a woman fabled for her unique cross-stitch, but I'm sure they'd tell us if Radu defeated Dracula.

DOCTOR: I told you, Peri. The surviving written accounts are few and often unreliable. Some things I can be reasonably sure of, but others...

PERI: What about Erimem? I mean, if she'd stayed with Dracula, became his bride, we'd know about it, wouldn't we? You'd know about it.

DOCTOR: That's a good question, Peri. Is Erimem changing history or taking her allotted place in it? This is your past but it's her future.

PERI: But his bride, Doctor. Surely that's recorded?

DOCTOR: There is some evidence, just one account, nothing that can be verified, that Dracula might have been married about this time.

PERI: What was her name?

DOCTOR: Well, that's the thing, Peri. I don't know. It was never recorded. Oof. Sorry.

MAN: Here, watch where you're going, mate.

PERI: That's just great. It was never recorded. Listen, Doctor, whether she's meant to be his bride or not, we've got to get Erimem away from Dracula, otherwise we're all history. History, get it? Oh, come on, Doctor, it wasn't that bad. No need to pull such a long face. Doctor?

DOCTOR: Peri, did you see that man who just brushed past us?

PERI: Not really. Was he someone important?

DOCTOR: In a way I suppose, yes. I don't want to alarm you, but I suspect... in fact I'm fairly certain that he had a knife.

PERI: A knife?

DOCTOR: A knife. Yes, Peri. And he just stabbed me in the chest. (thud)

PERI: Doctor! Help! Please, will someone get help?

(Hubbub of voices.)

RADU: I have listened to many of you in recent weeks, and you speak as if with one voice. You say you have suffered in silence and fear long enough. You have no homes, no cattle, no animals. The Sultan too wishes an end to this conflict that has wearied us all. That is why he makes you this offer. (cheers) Pledge fealty to Mehmed the Conqueror. Restore to him his just tributes, and this beloved land of ours may retain its independence. A Walachian prince will sit upon the throne. But we all know, my friends, that that Prince cannot, must not be my brother. Already Vlad's hold over his soldiers is weakening. Day by day more of them tire of the privations he has caused, and defect to our ranks. It is time to stand up and be counted, my friends, my countrymen, without fear. It is time we brought to an end Dracula's reign of cruelty! (cheers)

DRACULA: Erimem, stop. Very well, since you are so keen to know the truth.

ERIMEM: I am, Vlad. I need to hear it from your lips.

DRACULA: I did gather the old boyars in my banqueting hall, and I asked them, Erimem, I asked those fine men, those defenders of this land, how many Princes they had known in their lives. Even the youngest of them could count seven or more.

ERIMEM: You had them butchered and enslaved because they had followed other Princes?

DRACULA: Because they had shown no loyalty to those Princes.

ERIMEM: And you feared they would betray you too?

DRACULA: And there was one Prince in particular - a great man - but they drove him from this land. And not content with that, they cut him down in the marshes as he fled for his life. His son they buried alive. Oh no, Erimem, I punished the boyars not for future misdemeanours but for sins already committed. For the murders of my father and my eldest brother.

PERI: Come on, Doctor, wake up. Just flutter an eyelid or something. Don't leave me here in this stupid place. I'd make a terrible peasant. Oh Doctor, please.

DOBRIN: Peri, I came as soon as Irina told me. How is he?

PERI: I don't know, John. I just don't know.

DOBRIN: You're not having much luck with your friends of late, are you?

PERI: No thanks to your precious Dracula. So much for this happy and safe land.

DOBRIN: You've reported the crime to the Prince, of course.

PERI: Oh, I'm sure he knows all about it. Please, Doctor. Erimem needs you. I need you.

DOBRIN: His skin, it's icy cold. He's hardly breathing. Peri, I'm afraid the Doctor is dying.

PERI: No!

DRACULA: Death is always with us, Erimem, and I was still Murad's captive when I heard of my father's murder. I swore in that moment I would avenge his death and honour his name - Dracul, the Dragon.

ERIMEM: My family too was slain by power-hungry men. I cannot say I would have treated them differently had the gods granted me the opportunity.

DRACULA: I know I have sinned, Erimem. Hard times have forced hard choices upon me, and sometimes I have chosen wrong. But I believe that when I face my God, he will find that my good works outweigh the bad.

ERIMEM: Is that why you build churches and monasteries everywhere? To atone for your sins?

DRACULA: My greatest concern has always been to make this land safe for my subjects, for my son.

ERIMEM: Your son? Forgive me, Vlad, but I was unaware you had an heir.

DRACULA: Few know of his existence. Mihnea is a fine boy. My throne will be his one day, although at present he and I are not as close as I could wish. He feels ashamed that I sent him to hide with his mother's family. A cowardly act, he calls it. But until we can have peace it is not safe for him here.

ERIMEM: That is the act not of a coward, but of a father.

DRACULA: Mihnea does not see it so. Neither, I suppose, would I have done at his age. My father was a great man, Erimem, but if he had one failing it was that he was too trusting. He saw the boyars plot against him and he thought he could negotiate with them, just as he thought he could talk with the treacherous Murad when he journeyed willingly to the Sultan's court with two of his sons.

ERIMEM: Did he always intend for you and Radu to become bargaining tools, I wonder, or were you simply in the wrong place at the wrong time?

DRACULA: Does it matter? If Murad thought he could ensure the Dragon's loyalty with his threats against us, he was wrong.

ERIMEM: But your father's defiance came at great cost to you. You were only a boy, Vlad.

DRACULA: A boy, yes, but my father's son all the same. I would not abase myself in the court of my enemy as my brother did, buying favour by offering himself body and soul to the Sultan's son, the vile Mehmed. It

was Mehmed, incidentally, who gave Radu the nickname Handsome. Murad and his son may have broken my submissive brother, but they could not break me, no matter how many beatings I received. In time it was they who learned to respect and then to fear me. Come, it is getting dark.
(Thunder rolls in the distance.)

(Raining. Knock on door.)

DRACULA: Enter.

(Door opens.)

DOBRIN: Master, you summoned me?

DRACULA: It is time, John Dobrin.

DOBRIN: Oh, forgive me, my Prince, but surely it has not come to this?

DRACULA: With each new day more of my soldiers defect to my brother and his cohort of traitor boyars. Even the lowliest of my people, the ones for whom I have spilled my blood, imperilled my soul, now whisper against me. Tell me I am mistaken, John Dobrin. You are a truthful man. Look at me. Look me in the eye and tell me it is not so.

DOBRIN: They say they are tired. Tired of going hungry, of seeing their homes destroyed, of losing their families.

DRACULA: Hmm. So, to see an end to their trials they are prepared to sacrifice their protector?

DOBRIN: Not all, my Prince.

DRACULA: Not you, you mean. Well, Dracula's enemies will not find him unprepared. They will not ambush me as they did my father. It was for just this situation that I built my fortress. Come, let us prepare for departure.

DOBRIN: I will ride to Poenari ahead of you, my Prince. My brothers and I will ensure everything is prepared for your arrival.

DRACULA: Thank you, John Dobrin. I know I can always rely on your family even when all others desert me.

ERIMEM: Here, we should be able to talk under this gateway without getting too wet.

PERI: Why are you being so secretive?

ERIMEM: We are being watched, Peri. I don't see the spies now, but they have been following me since I left the palace.

PERI: It's nice to see your husband to be trusts you so much.

ERIMEM: Peri, please. I came to ask about the Doctor. How is he?

PERI: Not good. His wound's stopped bleeding but he's still unconscious. John says the knife may even have been poisoned.

ERIMEM: Vlad was furious when he heard. I had to dissuade him from punishing all his citizens until the culprit was brought forward.

PERI: Furious, eh? You don't think it's a bit of a coincidence that one day Dracula's going on about wanting me and the Doctor gone, and the next...

ERIMEM: Vlad would never do such a thing!

PERI: You're defending him now? May I remind you we're talking about the man who kidnapped you?

ERIMEM: Prince Vlad has treated me well, and I stay with him out of choice, not under duress. If you only knew him, Peri, as I have come to, then you would think differently.

PERI: We did meet, remember? Little incident with the stake and the horses? Oh come on, Erimem, this is me. You don't have to pretend everything's hunky-dory.

ERIMEM: Why must you be so cynical, Peri, always looking for the worst in everybody?

PERI: Have you forgotten who we're discussing here? Dracula is one of the most evil and sadistic men who ever lived!

ERIMEM: Vlad is an honourable man, Peri. He could be a good man, a benign ruler, but fate has conspired against him.

PERI: If you came here to ask me to be a bridesmaid, then I'm afraid you've had a wasted journey.

ERIMEM: No, Peri. I came to say goodbye.

PERI: What? But you can't.

ERIMEM: Vlad and I ride to Poenari tomorrow. This is the end.

PERI: You're serious about this, aren't you? All this time the Doctor and I have been wracking our brains trying to find a way to get you out of palace, and all along you wanted to stay.

ERIMEM: Please, Peri. I've asked this of you once before for Prince Vlad's sake. This time it is for mine. I want you to leave Târgoviște, find the Tardis and resume your travels. If you think of me at all, remember the happy moments we shared together. Say goodbye to the Doctor for me. I know he will recover. (crying)

Farewell, Peri. May the gods protect you. (runs away)

PERI: Erimem?

RADU: I wonder what my father would have said, Ayfer, had he lived to see this day.

AYFER: Master?

RADU: I doubt it would have pleased him. He thought me weak, untrustworthy. They all did. I was the odd sheep in our family fold. My father and brothers were alike in so many ways, fighting their own battles at the expense of their people, their families.

AYFER: I am sure it is not for me to say.

RADU: No, of course not. You're accustomed to being told what to do or to think by others, others who have power over you.

AYFER: Yes, my Lord. It is a servant's place.

RADU: We are not so very different, Ayfer, you and I, for all my royal blood. My brothers have always been the powerful ones, not I. I was never allowed to think my country's throne could be mine, that I could have been the Son of the Dragon. Dracula.

AYFER: (drops metal pot) Oh, forgive me, master. At the mention of Kasiklu Bey, it brought a chill to my blood. I meant no disrespect.

RADU: I wonder, Ayfer, is it the thirst for power itself that makes men unfit to wield it? I was content to obey my father, then the old Sultan, now Mehmed. And yet now that the throne lies within my grasp, now that I can feel its pull, I'm afraid. Will I prove them all wrong, prove myself the better man, or will I succumb to the curse of Dracula and become a worse tyrant than my brother?

(Cock crows. Peri yawns.)

PERI: Yeah, yeah. I heard you the first time, you stupid bird. Keep on like that and I'll lob a brick at you.

DOCTOR: Awake, for morning in the bowl of night has flung the stone that puts the stars to flight.

PERI: I'll lob a brick at you too if you keep quoting poetry at me, Doctor.

DOCTOR: Tut, tut. Such philistinism in one so young.

PERI: Doctor? Doctor! You're alive!

DOCTOR: I appear to be, don't I?

PERI: How?

DOCTOR: Thankfully my anatomy saved me. If I had had just the one heart, I would almost certainly be dead. Fortunately the assassin's knife fell between two stools, as it were, doing only minor damage. My system shut down to repair the severed blood vessels and damaged tissue, and now here you see me, fit as a fiddle.

PERI: Well, whatever. I'm just glad to see you again. I thought you'd be checking out for good.

DOCTOR: What, and miss all the fun? Never. Now, what's been happening while I've been knocking on death's door and looking through his letterbox?

PERI: Erimem's leaving us. She's staying with Dracula.

DOCTOR: Ah. I feared something of the sort might happen.

PERI: Really? You think he's hypnotised her or something?

DOCTOR: Peri, Erimem has spent a great deal of time with Prince Vlad. It's possible she's become genuinely fond of him.

PERI: Stockholm syndrome they call it, don't they? The kidnapped becoming close to the kidnapper?

DOCTOR: I doubt that's the case here.

PERI: Well, whatever it is, they're heading for Poenari today. That's where John Dobrin comes from, isn't it? Up north somewhere?

DOCTOR: On the northern border, yes. An ideal for what remains of Vlad's army to defend while they await reinforcements from the Hungarian king.

PERI: If reinforcements are forthcoming, that is.

DOCTOR: Indeed.

PERI: And are they, Doctor? I mean, will they be?

DOCTOR: No.

PERI: So the Turks will take Walachia after all.

DOCTOR: No again, I'm afraid. I think Mehmed has had enough of this place for one lifetime. Radu will be Walachia's new Prince, yes, but it's his brother who'll be remembered as the hero. The man whose extraordinary tactics saved his country.

PERI: What happens to him, Doctor? And Erimem, what about her?

DOCTOR: Best if we don't go into that right now. Now, why don't you speak to your friend John, see if he'll take you with him as part of the caravan. You could always claim you're headed for the border and pastures new. That should keep Vlad happy, should he make enquires.

PERI: And where will you be? Doctor, you're still recovering from being stabbed.

DOCTOR: I'll meet you in Poenari with the Tardis. Now please, Peri, just this once, no arguments. The roads to the south are still dangerous. I'll stand a better chance of traversing them alone.

PERI: Why do you want the Tardis in Poenari when it all kicks off?

DOCTOR: Because we might, just might, get one last chance to take Erimem away from this. But Peri, you need to prepare yourself for the fact that it might not happen.

PERI: It's okay, Doctor, I know. Her choice, right?

ERIMEM: (writing) Beloved friends, please do not worry about me. I know what I am doing. From childhood my life was mapped out for me. I was born to royalty, yet a slave to protocol. But Doctor, you showed me so much more. And Peri, you became like a sister to me. I can hardly bear the thought that I won't see you again. I know you will see this as a sacrifice, but I can be happy here. I am grateful for the time we have had together, but duty calls to me once more, and I can run from it no longer.

DRACULA: Our carriage awaits, Erimem.

ERIMEM: So soon?

DRACULA: We've a long journey ahead of us. We must reach my fortress before Radu learns of my plans. What are you writing?

ERIMEM: Just bidding farewell to my past.

(Horse snorts.)

DOCTOR: Steady there, my beauty. Save some of your energy for the journey. Come on, then. Best hoof forward.

PERI: (approaching) Doctor! Doctor, wait! Doctor!

DOCTOR: Peri. I thought you'd have left by now.

PERI: I want you to tell me, Doctor.

DOCTOR: Tell you what?

PERI: About the future. About what's going to happen. And don't say you're not sure. Don't change the subject. You've been keeping something from me.

DOCTOR: This isn't the time, Peri.

PERI: Then you'd best make it quick, buster, because I am not being packed off to Poenari or to anywhere else till I get the truth out of you. What do you know about Dracula's wife? You said there was one account. What did it say?

DOCTOR: It's only one person's account, hugely unreliable. History told from a single viewpoint.

PERI: Something's going to happen to her, isn't it? To Erimem. I'm a big girl, Doctor, I can take it. I have to know!

DOCTOR: Dracula's wife is mentioned in just one written statement from an unnamed peasant who claims to have witnessed the event at Poenari. An event involving Dracula and his bride, or at least someone who the peasant took to be Dracula's bride.

PERI: Go on.

DOCTOR: Look, Peri, we only have the word of a peasant.

PERI: Go on, Doctor. What does he do to her?

DOCTOR: Even in your time, Peri, there's a stretch of the River Argeş known as the Râul Doamnei, the Princess's River, a stretch which marks the spot where Dracula's so-called wife threw herself from the battlements of his fortress.

PERI: Dracula must have pushed her, murdered her. Erimem would never take her own life.

DOCTOR: I agree. But unless we can intervene, Erimem will die at Castle Dracula tomorrow night. Now get back to John Dobrin.

PERI: Where are you going?

DOCTOR: To alter history!

[Part Four]

DRACULA: Welcome, Erimem, to Castle Dracula, the proudest achievement of my reign.

ERIMEM: It is certainly impressive.

DRACULA: Its quarters, I regret, are less comfortable than those of my palace, but these walls are strong and we have the shelter of the mountainside. For our enemies to attack us they must come out into the fields below and risk being caught by our bowmen.

ERIMEM: No fortress can stand forever.

DRACULA: And only a fool would expect it to. It need only serve until help arrives.

ERIMEM: You are putting a lot of trust in Matthias.

DRACULA: He won't turn his back this time. If Walachia were to fall to the Conqueror, he knows it would leave his precious Hungary exposed.

ERIMEM: I pray it is so, Vlad. Why do you wear your royal black cloak? We are not at court now.

DRACULA: When my brother comes for me, Erimem - and he will come for me, whether it be next week or next month - he must know who he faces. He must recognise our father's chosen heir, the Son of the Dragon.

PERI: I'm warning you. If you don't put me down this instant I'll... I'll go up an octave!

RADU: Ah, the charming Lady Peri, is it not? I had thought you dead.

PERI: Oh. Hey, Handsome. Fancy meeting you here.

RADU: To what do I owe the pleasure of your company?

SOLDIER: I found her skulking in the trees.

PERI: Excuse me. I wouldn't know how to skulk if I tried. I was looking for the Doctor, actually. Couldn't help noticing his Tardis strapped to that cart over there.

RADU: Well deduced, my Lady. The Doctor is indeed here in my camp. He is my guest, as are you.

PERI: Thanks, but we can't stay. We need to get into Dracula's castle somehow and rescue Erimem.

RADU: I'm afraid I couldn't possibly allow you to do anything of the sort.

PERI: I'm sorry?

RADU: Vlad has no idea I am so close on his heels. I would rather he remained ignorant. If you were to be captured and the truth extracted from you under torture, he would know our whereabouts and ready himself accordingly.

PERI: But you've got to let us warn Erimem. We've got to get her out of there, out of that castle before you start bashing down the walls or whatever it is you've got planned.

RADU: No, Peri. I think it best you remain my guest for now along with the Doctor. I commend your loyalty to your mistress, but she has made her choice. She has chosen to side with my enemy, though it may cost her her life.

DOCTOR: Ah, Peri, there you are.

PERI: Doctor, I

DOCTOR: Thought I'd be more shocked to see you? Well, I suppose I could appear surprised. I could even say something like I thought I told you to wait in the village.

PERI: Hey, I did. I was just

DOCTOR: Chilling out with John and his brothers until you got bored and decided to take a little scout around.

PERI: It was all going fine until I

DOCTOR: Ran straight into trouble as usual.

PERI: Will you stop doing that? It's really annoying.

DOCTOR: Sorry. Well, I can hardly criticise. I had hoped to slip away and find you before now, and unfortunately Radu isn't in too trusting a mood.

PERI: So I'd noticed.

DOCTOR: He's on the verge of everything he's ever desired, Peri. Remember, for him this conflict goes way beyond politics or religion. It's about family.

PERI: Sounds like a tag line from some Hollywood blockbuster. Now, come on, Doctor, what's the plan?

DOCTOR: Plan?

PERI: Oh, quit messing me around. You must have a plan by now.

DOCTOR: Well, now you come to mention it, of course there's a plan. One in which we both play a part. Your job, Peri, is to get back to the village to John Dobrin. Tell him Radu is here, that his master must be informed, that he must act tonight. I think he'll know what to do.

PERI: And you?

DOCTOR: I'll provide the diversion that will draw the guards away from you and, with a little luck, maybe set a few more events in motion too, for better or worse.

DRACULA: Erimem, please, come away from the window.

ERIMEM: I thought I saw a shape across the river, Vlad. Some movement under those trees.

DRACULA: Oh, you are jumping at shadows. My brother is miles behind us.

ERIMEM: Oh, it is so quiet. Back home there were always people, servants, guards, my family. And then when I travelled with the Doctor I had friends, true friends, for the first time. Oh, my room in the Tardis, it felt as if the walls themselves were alive, watching over me.

DRACULA: You need not feel alone. I am here to watch over you.

ERIMEM: Are you, Vlad? For how much longer, I wonder.

DRACULA: You think I will abandon you? You are special to me, Erimem. You must not doubt that. Few are the women, in my experience, who know what it is to command a country at war, who understand the decisions I must take.

ERIMEM: I am flattered, my Prince.

DRACULA: But beyond those qualities, I admire you as a woman. Erimem, I meant what I said in Târgoviște. I want you to be my bride.

ERIMEM: And I have promised to be so.

DRACULA: You need not be lonely tonight, Erimem. You need not spend the night in this dark, draughty tower room. There are other places we can go.

ERIMEM: Oh, Vlad.

DOCTOR: Come on. Move away from the window.

SOLDIER: I'd put down the bow if I were you.

DOCTOR: Why would I want to do that?

SOLDIER: Well, because you're surrounded. Fire that arrow and you will... er... you will

DOCTOR: I will what? You don't have the slightest idea what will happen, do you? This arrow will make history.

SOLDIER: History?

DOCTOR: The question is, how does the story end?

SOLDIER: Oh, lower your swords, lads. The man's mad. What are you aiming at, anyway, friend? Dracula's fortress? You'll be lucky if that arrow makes half way across the river.

DOCTOR: Oh, this arrow will find its target, I can promise you that. (arrow loosed) What happens next is what's worrying me.

DRACULA: Well, Erimem? What do you say?

ERIMEM: Vlad, I... get down!

(Whoosh, thud!)

DRACULA: What? Who dares launch arrows at Castle Dracula?

ERIMEM: Not arrows, Vlad. A single arrow.

DRACULA: The assassin must have shot from atop Poenari hill. He probably saw the light through the window and assumed this to be my bedchamber.

ERIMEM: And he was an excellent shot. The arrow struck the candle flame itself, extinguishing it.

DRACULA: Then let us relight it. Oh, we will show this would-be assassin that we are not afraid. There.

ERIMEM: Vlad, look at the arrow. There is parchment attached to it. A message. I don't think this was an attack after all. I think it may be a warning.

PERI: Can we go now, John?

DOBRIN: Shh.

PERI: Look, we're wasting time. There's no one here and we have to hurry if we're to save Erimem.

DOBRIN: Peri, we have to be sure this part of the river bank isn't watched. If it is, we have to warn my brothers, have them take the horses back before they're seen.

PERI: Well, I don't see any sentries. Why would there be any? The road to the castle is right around the other side of that hill. Which is where we should be instead of freezing down here in the dark.

DOBRIN: Well then, walk up that road. I take it you're good at dodging cannon balls?

PERI: No need to get sarcastic. Okay, so how are we going to get into the castle? Swim?

DOBRIN: No. Through here.

PERI: A cave.

DOBRIN: This cave, Peri, is why the master will never be defeated, least of all by his treacherous brother.

PERI: I get it. It's a tunnel, isn't it? A secret passageway into the castle.

DOBRIN: It leads to Prince Vlad's cellar. Only he and my family know of its existence. The master likes to be prepared for all eventualities. He ensured that even at the hour of his darkest defeat he would escape to fight again.

PERI: Well, come on. What are we waiting for?

SOLDIER: Found him on the hilltop, sir, sending a message to Dracula. We couldn't stop him in time.

RADU: So you were a spy in my camp all along, Doctor. I'm disappointed.

DOCTOR: No, Radu. My actions had nothing to do with your family squabble. My friend is in that castle.

RADU: And for her sake you would imperil my country by sending a warning to Dracula.

DOCTOR: Your country? I'm sure your brother would claim he fights for Walachia's sake too.

RADU: We can no longer wait for the dawn. I want all the men readied. Wake those that are sleeping. We will ford the river and set up the cannons and bombards in the fields beyond. Quickly, man, before our foe can flee again into the night.

SOLDIER: Sir. Well, get a move on, you lazy curs.

DOCTOR: You don't have to do this, Radu. Vlad has no army left. You've taken his palace and his throne. You've won the war.

RADU: No, Doctor, not yet. I know my brother. While he is alive and free, Dracula will cast a shadow over this land.

DOCTOR: So in order to remove that shadow you're quite happy to see Erimem dead. Peri too, if she gets in your way.

RADU: The throne of Walachia is now mine, Doctor. Your companions, by conspiring with my enemy, are both guilty of treason, as are you.

DOCTOR: And how do you plan to punish me, Prince Radu? Hang me? Boil me alive? Decapitate me? That's always been a favourite.

RADU: I believe the recommended penalty is impalement.

DOCTOR: Well done, your Highness. You've been in power for what, five minutes? And you already sound just like your predecessor.

DRACULA: Doctor. Always it is the Doctor and the girl Peri. I should have rid myself of the pair of them when I had the chance. You swore to me that they would leave my country.

ERIMEM: I believed they would. But is it not a good thing they stayed? The Doctor's warning...

DRACULA: The Doctor's warning. I am supposed to believe the false words of that parchment, am I? That my brother, who cannot pick his own nose without first begging leave of the Sultan, has disobeyed his master, followed us here secretly, and is now poised to attack?

ERIMEM: Why would he lie? The Doctor is trying to help us.

DRACULA: I need no help against Radu.

ERIMEM: No? Then why is it, Vlad, that you despatch letters daily to the King of Hungary? Why then do you pace the towers of this fortress, waiting for his reply? Your brother's army is far greater than yours. You need all the help you can get.

DRACULA: The army of the Conqueror was far greater still and yet he was bested by Dracula.

ERIMEM: So for what do you fight this time, Vlad? The Sultan is no longer a threat. The boyars have sided with your brother. Radu is the new Prince of Walachia.

DRACULA: And what would you have me do, eh? Turn tail and run? Leave my land and my subjects to the puppet of an infidel without lifting a hand in protest?

ERIMEM: I would have you pick your fights, Vlad. What good would it do to see your few remaining supporters killed in a futile gesture?

DRACULA: My reinforcements will come!

ERIMEM: No, Vlad, I don't think they will. Matthias will not pledge his forces to a lost cause. Do you not see? All that remains to you is your pride and your life, and I would prefer to see you sacrifice the first in order to preserve the second.

DRACULA: Then you betray me too, Erimem.

ERIMEM: I would gladly fight at your side, my Prince, were there any purpose in doing so, but I will not die at your side merely to satisfy your pride.

DRACULA: Erimem, you will not walk away from me! Erimem! You will regret this effrontery. Dracula is not yet as powerless as you would have him be.

PERI: Ow! Would you mind not kicking me in the face? It's tough enough to hold onto these rungs as it is.

DOBRIN: Do you want to swap places? I wouldn't care for your chances with the master's guards to see your head popping out of his well. At least they'd recognise me, most of them.

PERI: A legend in your own lifetime. Ow! You did it again. Right in the mouth that time.

DOBRIN: And yet still it won't stay shut. Now shush. We're here. Give me a second to... (scraping) Ah, there. We've made it, Peri. Behold, Castle Dracula.

PERI: Behold nothing. All I can see is your fat butt.

DOCTOR: I think you're forgetting something, Prince Radu. If it hadn't been for me, for the advice I gave you, you'd be back home in Turkey with the Sultan by now, defeated and disgraced.

RADU: I forget nothing, but your act of treachery against me was witnessed by too many men.

DOCTOR: And you can't afford to appear weak, is that it? Can't afford to give the boyars a reason to turn on you as they have turned on every Prince they've know. In which case, your Highness, why take me all this way from your camp to do the deed?

RADU: I am not my brother, Doctor. I believe you are a good man, if foolish. I believe your words to me were offered in good faith and not intended to buy time for a defeated despot. Please do not disabuse me of that notion.

DOCTOR: I wouldn't dream of it. In fact I shall reflect upon it as the oiled stake slowly skewers me.

RADU: Go to them, Doctor.

DOCTOR: I beg your pardon?

RADU: Your friends, Erimem and Peri. Go to them, save them. I did not bring you here to kill you but to set you free. I ask only this in return. Once your task is done, leave my country and never return. Were our paths to cross again I would not be able to offer such clemency a second time.

DOCTOR: I understand. And thank you, Prince Radu. I was wrong about you. You're a much stronger man than your brother ever was. (runs off)

RADU: I pray you are right, Doctor.

DRACULA: Here you are, girl. Thought to hide from me, did you?

ERIMEM: I'm not hiding, Vlad. These battlements provide a better view than the windows below. I was seeking proof of what the Doctor told us, what I know to be true, and look, Vlad. The castle is surrounded. Radu is preparing his cannons.

DRACULA: Then let him. Let him try to batter down my walls. Let his men tire themselves and exhaust their weapons. They will not succeed.

ERIMEM: They must, in time.

DRACULA: You seem very sure I will lose this battle, Erimem.

ERIMEM: You saw the Doctor's note. I don't believe he would have sent it had he not foreseen... I mean.
DRACULA: Oh. This Doctor can see the future now, can he? He knows Matthias will not come to my aid? He knows my fortress will fall? Perhaps he is some kind of a sorcerer? Or merely a spy like you, Erimem.
ERIMEM: Vlad, you're hurting me.
DRACULA: That is why you were sent here, isn't it? To gain my confidence, to weaken me.
ERIMEM: You know I do not serve the Sultan.
DRACULA: I am not talking about the Sultan. I am speaking of Matthias, King of Hungary. You are his agent, are you not?
ERIMEM: You're being ridiculous. Do you not have enough enemies, Vlad, that you must invent conspiracies among your friends?
DRACULA: Has he made a pact with Mehmed now? Am I to be sacrificed for a temporary truce between neighbours? Matthias must have known I would expose his deception. He must have known your life would be forfeit. You owe him nothing, Erimem. You can speak true to me.
ERIMEM: You know the truth already. You are just looking for somebody to blame, somebody you can punish.
DRACULA: Careful what you say, spy! One more lie from you and I will hurl you from these battlements!
ERIMEM: Do as you wish. See if my death helps living with the truth any easier for you.
PERI: Get your hands off her!
ERIMEM: Peri, get back! You don't know what you're doing.
PERI: I said get your hands off.. (scream)
DRACULA: Do you dare to assault your Prince, girl?
ERIMEM: Vlad, no.
DRACULA: Enough, Erimem. I tire of excuses. I have stayed my hand too often at your bidding. I have been weak! I have allowed evil to take root in my country, and now we reap its bitter fruit! But no more! This girl will be my first sacrifice to the god of victory. Her blood will secure our triumph.
ERIMEM: No, Vlad! Oh please, let her go.
DRACULA: It is too late!
PERI: Erimem, help me! I can't... (scream recedes)

DOCTOR: Oh, come on. Must be along here somewhere. Unless, of course, the accounts of Dracula's famous secret tunnel are more conjecture than fact. Ah ha. That's one point to the history books.

SOLDIER: Stop right there.

DOCTOR: Minus a few hundred to me, it seems. There's no need to start poking swords in people's backs. I can assure you I'm alone and unarmed. You followed me from the camp, I take it? Did Radu send you?

SOLDIER: Silence, or you die.

PERI: Erimem, help me! I can't hold on!

ERIMEM: I've got you, Peri. Oh, the wind is so strong, I can't... Vlad. Vlad, please.

DRACULA: Let her die, Erimem, like all traitors.

ERIMEM: She's not a traitor!

DOBRIN: My Prince, are you all right?

PERI: John! John, help me!

DOBRIN: Master, what's happening? Peri and I came to warn you. Your brother's forces have you surrounded.

DRACULA: So the girl isn't a traitor after all?

ERIMEM: Please, whoever you are, I cannot hold onto Peri for much longer.

DRACULA: Save her if you wish, John Dobrin. I won't stop you. We shall all be dead soon anyway.

DOBRIN: (effort) How did you get yourself into such a mess, girl? Did you not think to tread carefully in this wind?

PERI: Yeah, the wind. Right, that's what it was. That's what sent me over the edge. Not your benevolent lord and master, oh no.

DRACULA: The girl attacked me. What was I to think?

PERI: I was trying to stop

(Cannon fire.)

PERI: Oh, never mind. Well, I'm not standing around here waiting for a cannon ball to come bouncing off my head. If you want to give up and die, well, good luck, your Highness. Hope that works out for you. But I'm leaving now and I'm taking Erimem with me.

ERIMEM: No, Peri. I gave my oath to Prince Vlad and I will not go back on it.

PERI: He almost killed you. You can't still be defending him.

DRACULA: Go. Go with your friend. John Dobrin will show you the way to safety. I was wrong to question your motives for staying with me. I release you from your vow.

ERIMEM: But Vlad, I

DRACULA: Now just, just go

ERIMEM: I will go, but only on the condition that you come with me.

PERI: No, Erimem! He's released you from your vow. This is your chance. Leave him.

DRACULA: Your friend is right, Erimem. It is time for us to part. John, is everything prepared?

DOBRIN: Yes, my Prince. My brothers wait at the cave entrance with enough horses for you, the Princess and your personal guard. We've planned a route through the Făgăraș mountains that no man will be able to follow.

ERIMEM: You see, Vlad? You think your people have turned their backs on you, but there are still some who believe. Come with us.

DOBRIN: She's right, my Prince. Radu cannot protect us as you have. Walachia will need your strength again. It is your duty to live for us.

DRACULA: My duty? I have sacrificed my immortal soul for this country and still you want more. Oh, very well. Lead on. Let fate decide the outcome.

PERI: Oh, God damn it!

DOCTOR: Peri? Peri, is that you?

PERI: Doctor! Are you a sight for sore eyes. What are you doing here?

DOCTOR: I came looking for you. I ran into the rest of the Dobrin brothers. I thought they were Radu's men at first. It took a while for us all to work out we were on the same side.

ERIMEM: Doctor! Oh Doctor, you don't know how relieved I am to find you waiting for me.

PERI: Everything's all right, Doctor. Dracula released Erimem from her promise. She can come back to the Tardis with us.

DOCTOR: Is that what you want, Erimem? I mean, what you truly want? Because whatever your answer this time

ERIMEM: I wish to travel with you and Peri again, Doctor. That is, if you will have me.

DOCTOR: That's a question you don't ever have to ask, Erimem.

PERI: I don't want to break up the party, but er, Dracula's right behind us, so I suggest we get out of here before he claps eyes on you, Doctor, and changes his mind again.

ERIMEM: It would be for the best. I have said everything I have to say to Prince Vlad.

DOCTOR: I'll stay, if you don't mind. There are a few things I have to say. Wait for me outside.

PERI: Suit yourself. (receding) You know, Erimem, I think we'd have been better off with a vampire. At least he'd have some manners.

DRACULA: Doctor, why am I not surprised to find you here. We've only met once and yet somehow I feel you have had more than a little to do with my recent fortunes, both good and bad.

DOCTOR: I have only ever had one goal, you Highness.

DRACULA: Yes, I think I believe that. Look after her, Doctor. She is a unique woman.

DOCTOR: I know.

DRACULA: She would have made a magnificent bride. Such wisdom, such spirit. But it is not to be. I must now return to the land of my birth, to Transylvania. But I will be back, and my father's throne will be mine again.

DOCTOR: It will indeed, I can promise you that.

DRACULA: You are a strange man, Doctor. Erimem believes you to be a sorcerer. Is she correct? Do you possess the dark arts?

DOCTOR: No more than you do. You can't believe everything people say about you. That's how myths and legends start.

DRACULA: I must be gone. Will you look after Erimem, Doctor? If she is found, my brother's soldiers may wish to exact their revenge upon her for the sins I have committed.

DOCTOR: I may not be a sorcerer, Vlad, but I can make Erimem disappear like a breath in the breeze. But I'll need John Dobrin's help.

RADU: (writing) And so Castle Dracula has been taken with hardly a fight, but my worst fear has come to pass. Of my brother there is no trace. He's vanished as completely as if he had become one with the mist and drifted away. And there is sadness too, because I hear from one of the villages that the Doctor's mission was in vain. The Pharaoh, Erimem, was seen falling from the battlements of Castle Dracula. One of the last casualties of our war. It is said she chose to have her body rot and be eaten by the fish of the Argeș rather than remain a prisoner any longer. I greatly regret her passing, and I swear that while I am voivode

DOCTOR: (reading) Her death will not be forgotten.

PERI: I still can't believe you stole Radu's journal.

ERIMEM: I still can't understand why you stole his journal, Doctor.

DOCTOR: Let's just say there are some things I'd rather history didn't record. (tears paper) Anyway, I didn't. Steal his journal, I mean. While John Dobrin was reclaiming the Tardis for us, I paid one of Radu's soldiers to bring it to me.

PERI: Bribery and corruption, eh? Wouldn't have happened in Dracula's time.

ERIMEM: You say that as a joke, Peri, but in fact I

PERI: Come on, Erimem. Are you forgetting what he tried

DOCTOR: I think you'll just have to agree to disagree on this one, please.

ERIMEM: What will happen to him, Doctor?

DOCTOR: To Dracula? Well, he'll make good on his promise. He'll be back to reclaim his throne.

PERI: You've got to be kidding me! So all of this was for nothing?

DOCTOR: I wouldn't say that, Peri. I'm sure all concerned have learned a great deal from the experience, even if it's only that history isn't always written by the victors, as I think I mentioned when we first arrived here. Not that anyone listens.

PERI: Now, now, Doctor. We always listen, don't we, Erimem?

ERIMEM: Of course. One should always listen to one's fool. He is the only one who speaks wisdom.

DOCTOR: Yes indeed. Most amusing.

PERI: Come on, Doctor. As you yourself said, it's only the word of a single unreliable source.

DOCTOR: Huh, not bad for a couple of concubines.

PERI: Hey!